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Insights into job mobility from quarterly Labour Force statistics

A number of quarterly measures from the Labour Force Survey that provide insights into recent and expected mobility

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 **Source:** [Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, December 2021](#)

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The headline estimates of job mobility in Australia, which are available back to 1972, are based on information collected every February in the Labour Force Survey supplementary topic 'Participation, job search and mobility'. These annual statistics are released a few months after the corresponding February Labour Force data.

The February 2021 data showed that 7.5% (975,000) of employed people had changed their employer or business in the first year of the pandemic.

This was the lowest rate of job mobility on record in the annual series. It was lower than the previous estimate for the year ending February 2020 (8.1%) and slightly lower than the previous low in the series (7.7% in the year ending February 2017).

Chart 1. Employed persons who changed jobs during the year



Note: 2015 to 2021 data is available from Table 17 in the data downloads section of the [Job mobility, February 2021](#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/job-mobility/latest-release#job-mobility>) publication. Pre-2015 historical data can be found in 2018 release of [Participation, Job Search and Mobility](#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/6226.0Main+Features1February%202018?OpenDocument>) publication.

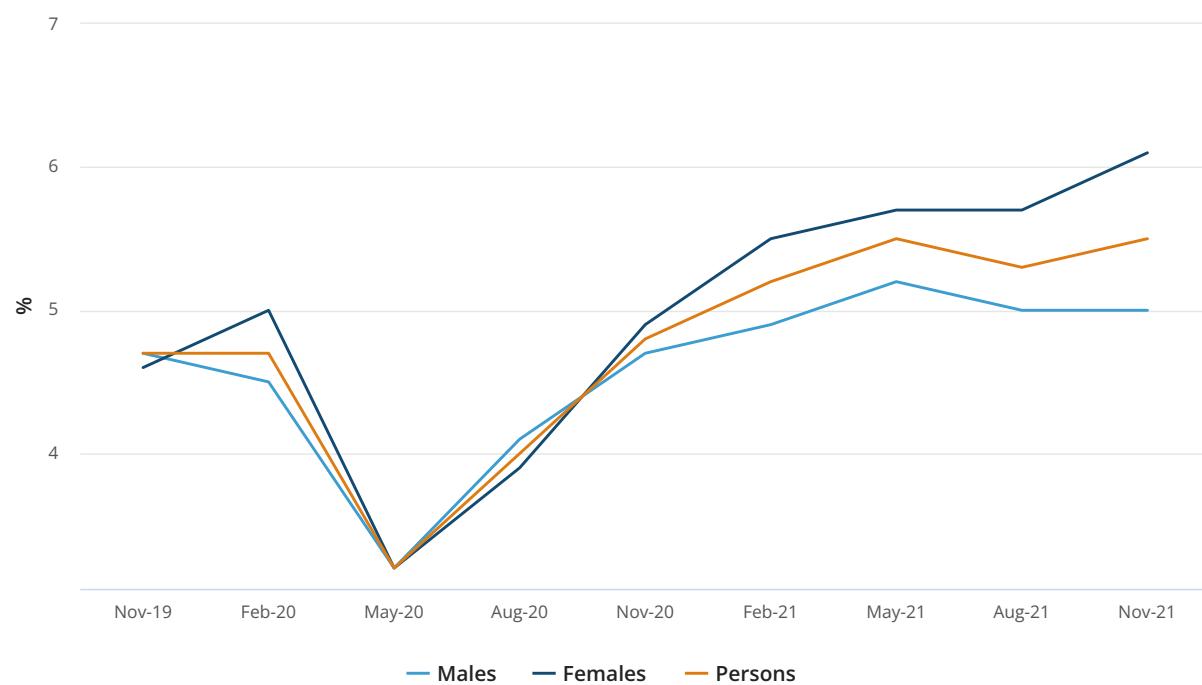
Beyond the annual job mobility measure, there are a number of quarterly measures from the Labour Force Survey that also provide insights into recent and expected mobility. These include information on employment tenure and future expectations (which have both been collected on a quarterly basis over a long period of time) and the reasons that people lost or left their last job (collected since August 2014 and available from the Labour Force microdata).

The latest quarterly data, for November 2021, was released on 23 December 2021.

What does the employment tenure data show?

Immediately prior to the pandemic, around 4.7% of employed people had been with their employer or business for fewer than three months. This fell to 3.2% early in the pandemic, as people with shorter employment tenure were over-represented in employment losses, and was slightly elevated during 2021, as people returned to work. This figure was between 5.2% and 5.5% in each of the four quarter months of February, May, August and November 2021.

Chart 2. Percentage of employed with employer/business for fewer than 3 months



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Pivot table EQ02

What does reason lost or left last job data show?

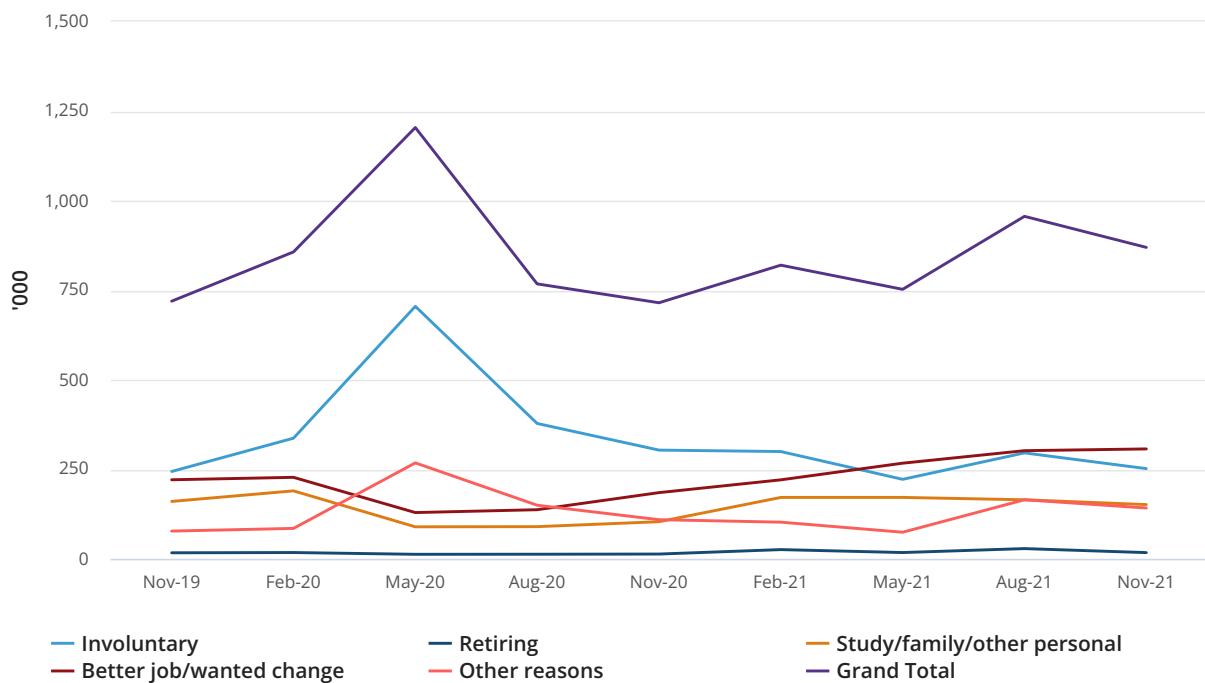
Detailed data from the Labour Force microdata can provide insights into the reasons people lost or left a job in the previous three months.

However, it is important to remember that this data is based on whether a person indicates that they have lost or left any job in the previous three months, and not necessarily a

person's main job (which is the focus of most quarterly Labour Force data). For multiple job holders, this data may reflect changes in their main job or in a secondary job.

Immediately prior to the pandemic, around 228,000 people indicated that they left a job because they changed to a 'better job' or 'wanted a change'. This fell to around 129,000 people in May 2020, before rising to pre-pandemic levels in May 2021 (267,000 people). There were more than 300,000 people who had lost or left a job who reported this in both August and November 2021.

Chart 3. People who had lost or left a job in the past three months, by reason



Source: Longitudinal Labour Force Microdata

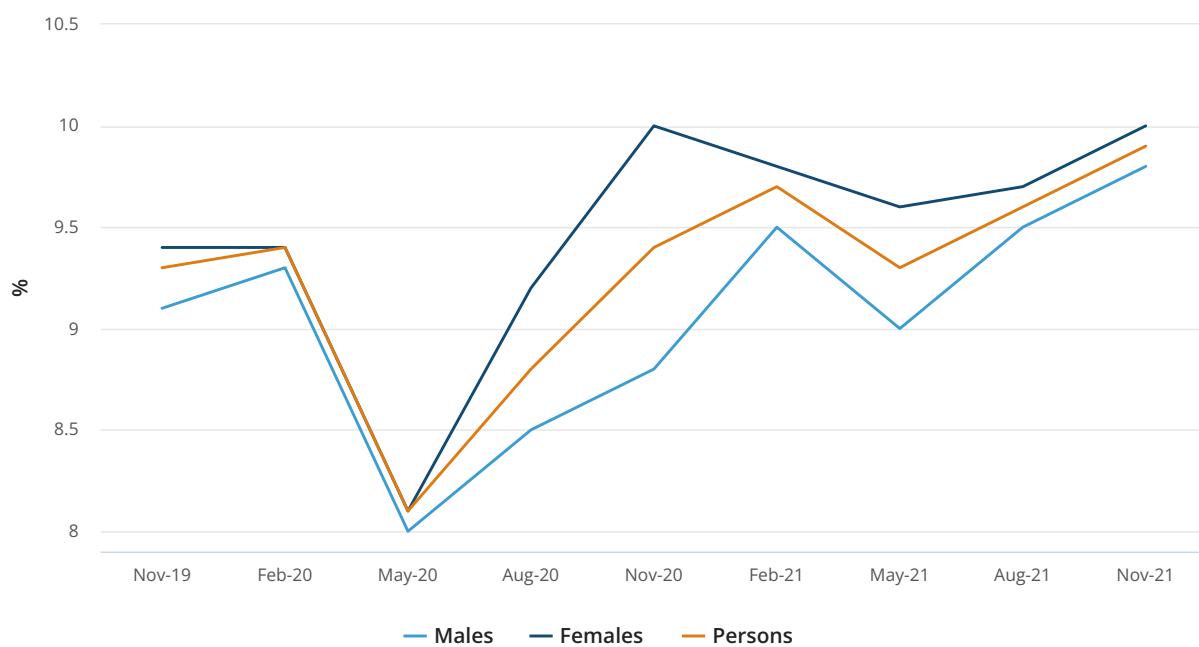
Given the reduced job mobility during the first year of the pandemic, some of this increase in 2021 will reflect delayed/deferred job mobility. The rolling two-yearly average for this reason was around 206,000 people in November 2019 and around 222,000 people in November 2021.

What does the future employment expectations data show?

In addition to asking questions about a person's current labour market situation and recent changes, on a quarterly basis the ABS also asks LFS respondents whether they expect to be employed with their current employer or business in 12 months and, if not, why.

Immediately prior to the pandemic, around 9.4% of employed people indicated they did not expect to be with their current employer or business in 12 months. This fell to 8.1% early in the pandemic, as people with shorter employment tenure were over-represented in employment losses and job mobility. Expectations of change were slightly elevated at the end of 2021, at around 9.9% of all employed people.

Chart 4. Percentage of employed people who do not expect to be with their current employer/business in 12 months



Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Table 17

The number of people indicating they expect to change jobs in the next 12 months also rose in November, from 636,000 people in August 2021 (4.9% of employed people) to 705,000 people in November 2021 (5.3%). This quarterly increase of around 70,000 people was

greater than the usual seasonal increase, which averaged around 24,000 over the previous five August-November periods.

People indicating that they expected to retire in the next year also increased, up to 159,000 people in November 2021 (1.2%). This compared with 139,000 people in August 2021 (1.1%) and 110,000 people immediately prior to the pandemic (0.8%).

It is important to remember that these are only expectations for the future and the actual outcomes may be different.